

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Win-Win in Hendersonville

Good morning and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature. With all the attention given to development impacts in the mountains, this morning we're going to look at how a development in Hendersonville, North Carolina will actually improve the situation for wildlife and bird watchers.

There aren't a lot of wetlands in the mountains. Our topography generally dictates that water quickly flows downhill to flatter lands, instead of pooling up and creating wetlands. And most wetlands we had were drained and converted to other uses, like agriculture or shopping centers. And that's exactly what happened, decades ago to a parcel of land near Interstate 26 in Henderson County.

In the ensuing years, much of the surrounding land has been protected. 42-acre Jackson Park was created, a 47-acre bog was purchased by the North Carolina Plant Conservation Program, and the city of Hendersonville agreed to protect the 154-acre Mud Creek Swamp. These areas became a haven for migratory birds. The Henderson County Bird Club distributes a list of 202 birds that may be seen at that park, ranging from an occasional sandhill crane to wild turkey to more than three dozen warblers. As an area flush with birds, the area became a focal point for bird watchers too.

Today a Wisconsin developer wants to build a 408-unit retirement community on the site, initially to the displeasure of local wildlife enthusiasts. Planning board and city council meetings became contentious. However, the developer was willing to work with conservationists to find a way everyone would be happy.

In the end, the developer agreed to restore 50 acres of the site from agriculture back to wetland. He also agreed to take those 50 acres plus another twenty and put them into permanent conservation, most likely in a conservation easement. Two of the four duplex buildings that had people worried because of their proximity to the wetland were eliminated and the other two were moved nearly one-hundred feet away from the wetland. Also, no trees over 12 inches in diameter will be cut except where roads are built

In the end, the developer will get his retirement community, and wildlife will get 50 acres of improved habitat and 70 acres of permanently protected habitat which will in turn link the adjoining protected areas, creating a 318-acre expanse of protected wetlands.

An important birding site will be improved and protected, and residents of the retirement community will be able to look out on the marsh and enjoy the black winged black bird singing. As development continues to get more and more attention in the Southern Appalachians, this

example from Henderson County shows there is a way development can be done well, to the benefit of all involved.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peebles.